A pleasant and delightful

HISTORY

OF

THOMAS HICKATHRIFT.

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HISTORY

OF

THOMAS HICKATHRIFT.

He that doth buy this little Book,
Observe what you in it do look,
When you have read it, then may say,
Your Money is not thrown away.

CHAP. I.

Of his Birth, Parentage, and Education.

IN the reign before William the conqueror, I have read in ancient history that there dwelt a man in the parish of the Isle of Ely, in the county of Cambridge, whose name was Tho-

mas Hickathrift, a poor man, and a day labourer yet he was a very ſtout man, and able to perform two days work inſtead of one; He having one ſon, and no more children in the world, he called him by his own name, Thomas Hickathrift. This old man put his ſon to good learning, but he would take none, for he was as we call them in his age, none of the wiſeſt ſort, but ſomething leſs, and had no docility at all in him.

His father being ſoon called out of the world, his mother was tender of him, maintained him by her hand-labour as well as ſhe could; he being ſlothful, and not willing to work to get a penny for his living, but all his delight was to be in the chimney corner, and would eat as much at one time as would ſerve four or five men; for he was in height, when he was but ten years of age, about eight feet, and in thickneſs five feet, and his hand was like unto a ſhoulder of mutton; and in all his parts from top to toe, he was like unto a monſter, and yet his great ſtrength was not known.

CHAP. II.

How Thomas Hickathrift's *ſtrength came to be known.*

THE firſt time that his ſtrength was known, was by his mother going to a rich farmer's houſe (ſhe being but a poor woman) to deſire a bottle of ſtraw to ſhift herſelf and her ſon Thomas. The farmer being a very honeſt, charitable man, bid her take what ſhe would. She going home to her ſon Tom, ſaid, I pray go to ſuch a place and fetch me a bottle of ſtraw, I have aſked him leave. He ſwore he would not go: nay, pray thee, Tom go, ſaid his old mother. He ſwore again he would not go, unleſs ſhe would borrow him a cart rope. She being willing to pleaſe him, went and borrowed him a cart rope to his deſire.

He taking it, went his way; coming to the farmer's houſe, the maſter was in the barn, and two men threſhing. Said Tom, I am come for a bottle of ſtraw.

Tom, ſaid the maſter, take as much as thou canſt carry. He laid down the cart rope, and began to make his bottle; ſaid they, Tom thy rope is too ſhort, and jeer'd poor Tom, but he ſitted the man well for it: for he made his bottle, and when he had finiſhed it, there was ſuppoſed to be a load of ſtraw in it, of two thouſand weight. Said they, what a great fool art thou, thou canſt not carry the tenth of it? Tom took the bottle and flung it over his ſhoulder, and made no more of it than we do of an hundred weight, to the great admiration of maſter and men.

Tom Hickathrift's ſtrength being then known in the town, they would no longer let him lie baking by the fire in the chimney corner, every one would be hiring him to work: They ſeeing him to have ſo much ſtrength, told him that it was a ſhame for him to live ſuch a lazy courſe of life, and to lie idle day after day, as he did.

Tom ſeeing them bait him in a manner as they did, went firſt to one work

then to another; but at length came a man, who would hire him to go to the wood; for he had a tree to bring home, and he would content him. Tom went with him, and he took with him four men besides; but when they came to the wood, they set the cart on the tree, and began to draw it up with pullies; Tom seeing them not able to stir it, said, stand away, ye fools, then takes it up, and sets it on one end, and lays it in the cart; Now, says he, see what a man can do. Merry it is true, said they. When they had done, as they came through the wood they met the wood-man, Tom asked him for a stick to make his mother a fire with. Aye, said the wood-man, take one that thou canst carry. Tom espy'd a tree bigger than that one that was in the cart, and lays it on his shoulders, and goes home with it as fast as the cart and six horses could draw it. This was the second time that Tom's strength was known.

When Tom began to know that he had more strength than twenty men, he then began to be merry and very

tractable, and would run, or jump, took great delight to be amongſt company, and to go to fairs and meetings, to ſee ſports and paſtimes.

Going to a feaſt, the young men were all met, ſome to cudgels, ſome to wreſtling, ſome throwing the hammer and the like; Tom ſtood a while to ſee the ſport, and at laſt goes to them that were throwing the hammer; and ſtanding a little to ſee their man-like ſport, at laſt he takes the hammer in his hand to feel the weight of it, and bid them ſtand out of the way, for he would throw it as far as he could. Aye, ſaid the Smith, and jeer'd poor Tom, you'll throw it a great way I'll warrant you; Tom took the hammer in his hand and flung it; and there was a river about five or ſix furlongs off, and flung it into that: When he had done, he bid the ſmith fetch the hammer again, and laughed the ſmith to ſcorn.

When Tom had done this exploit, he would go to the wreſtling, tho' he had no more ſkill of it than an aſs, but what he did by ſtrength; yet he flung all that came to oppoſe him, for

if one he laid hold of them they were gone. Some he would throw over his head, some he would lay down flat, and how he pleased; he would not like to strike at their heels, but flung them two or three yards from him, ready to break their necks asunder; so that none at last durst go into the ring to wrestle with him, for they took him to be some devil that was come among them; so Tom's fame soon spread more and more in the country.

CHAP. II.

How Tom *came to be a Brewer's man, and how he came to kill a giant, and at last was Mr* Hickathrift.

TOM's fame being spread abroad both far and near, there was not a man durst give him an angry word, for he was something fool-hardy, and did not care what he did unto them, so that all them who knew him would not in the least displease him. A

length there was a Brewer at Lynn, who wanted a good lusty man to carry his beer to the marsh, and to Wisbeech: hearing of Tom, went to hire him, but Tom seemed coy, and would not be his man, until his mother and friends persuaded him, and his master intreated him; likewise promised him that he should have a new suit of clothes, and every thing answerable from top to toe; besides he should eat and drink of the best. Tom at last yielded to be his man, and his master told him how fat he must go; for you must understand there was a monstrous Giant, who kept some part of the marsh, and durst not go that way; for if they did, he would keep them, or kill them; or else he would make bond slaves of them.

But to come to Tom and his master, he did more work in one day, than all his men could do in three; so that his master seeing him very tractable, and to look so well after his business, made him his head man to go into the marsh, to carry beer by himself, for he needed no man with him, Tom went every

day in the week to Wisbech, which was a very good journey and was but forty miles the broadeway.

Tom going so long that way a iourney and finding that way which the Giant kept was neerer by half, and Tom before, by being so well kept, and drinking so much strong ale as he did: one day he was going to Wisbech, and without saying any thing to his master, or to any of his fellow servants, he was resolved to make the neerest way to the wood; or lose his life to win the horse, or lose the saddle, to kill or be killed, if he met with the giant. And with this resolution he goes the neerest way with his cart and horses to go to Wisbech, but the giant perceiving him, and seeing him to be so bold, thought to prevent him, and came, intending to take his cart for a prize; but Tom cared not a fart for him.

The giant met Tom like a lion, as tho' he would have swallowed him up at a mouthful: Sirrah, says he, who gave you authority to ride my way? Do you not know that I make all stand

in fear of my sight, and you like an impudent rogue must come and fling open my gates at your pleasure! How dare you presume to do this? Are you so careless of your life? I will make thee an example for all rogues under the sun; dost thou not care what thou dost? And do you not see how many heads hang upon yonder tree that have offended my law! But thy head shall hang higher than all the rest, for an example.

Tom made him answer, A turd in your teeth for your news, for you shall not find me like one of them. No, said the giant; why? Thou art but a fool if thou comest to fight with such an one as I am, and bring no weapon to defend thyself withal. Said Tom, I have a weapon here will make you understand you are a traitorily rogue. Aye sirrah, said the giant, and took that word in high disdain, that Tom should call him a traitorily rogue, and with that he ran into his cave to fetch his club, intending to dash out Tom's brains at the first blow.

Tom knew not what to do, or a

weapon, for he knew his whip would do but little good againſt ſuch a monſtrous beaſt as he was, for he was in height about twelve feet, and ſix feet about the waiſt: but while the giant went for his club, Tom bethought himſelf of two very good weapons, for he makes no more ado, but takes out the axale-tree, and a wheel for his ſhield and buckler; and very good weapons they were, eſpecially in time of need.

The giant coming out again, began to ſtare at Tom, to ſee him take the wheel in one hand and axle-tree in the other to defend himſelf with. O! ſaid the giant, you are like to do great ſervice with theſe weapons; I have here a twig that will beat thee, and thy wheel and axle-tree to the ground; that which the Giant called a twig, was as thick as ſome mill-poſts are, but Tom was not daunted for all his big and threatening ſpeeches, for he ſaw perfectly there was no way except one, which was, to kill or be killed; ſo the Giant made at Tom with ſuch a vehement force, that he made Tom's wheel crack

again, and Tom lent the Giant as good, for he gave him such a weighty blow on the side of his head, that made the Giant reel again. What said Tom, are you drunk with my strong beer already?

The Giant recovering laid on Tom most sad blows; but still as they came, Tom kept them off with his wheel, so that he had no hurt of all: In short, Tom plied his work so well, and laid such huge blows on the Giant, that sweat and blood together ran down his face, and being fat and foggy, with fighting so long, he was almost tired out, and asked Tom to let him drink a little water, and then he would fight with him again. No, said Tom, my mother did not teach me that wit; who would be the fool then? Tom finding the Giant began to grow weary, and that he failed in his blows, thought it was best to make hay while the sun did shine, for he laid on so fast as though he had been mad, 'till he brought the Giant down to the ground. The Giant seeing himself down, and Tom laying

forward on him, made him roar in a most lamentable manner, and prayed for him not to take away his life, and he would do any thing for him, and yield himself to him, and be his servant; but Tom having no more mercy on him than a dog or bear, laid still at the Giant, 'till he laid him for dead, and when he had done he cut off his head and went into the the cave, where he found great store of silver and gold, which made his heart to leap.

Now having done this action, killing the Giant he put his cart together again, loaded it, and drove to Wisbich and delivered his beer; and coming home to his master, he told it to him; his master was so over joy'd at the news, that he would not believe him, till he had seen: and getting up the next day, he and his master went to see if he spoke truth or not, together with most of the town of Lynn. When they came to the place and found the giant dead, he then shew'd the place where his head was, and what silver and gold there was in the cave, all of them leaped for

joy, for this monster was a great enemy to all the country.

This news was spread all up and down the country, how *Tom Hickathrift*, had killed the giant, and well was he that could run or go to see the giant and the cave: then all the folks made pictures for by; and Tom was a better reputed man than before.

Tom took possession of the giant's cave by consent of the whole company, and every one said he deserved twice as much more: Tom pulled down the cave, built him a fine house where the cave stood; and the ground that the giant kept by force and strength, some of which he gave to the poor for their common, the rest he made pastures of and divided the most part into tillage, to maintain him and his mother *Jane Hickathrift*.

Tom's fame was spread both far and near through the country; and it was no longer Tom but Mr. *Hickathrift*; so that he was now the chief man among them; for the people feared Tom's anger as much as they did the giant be-

fore. Tom kept men and maid ſervants, and lived moſt bravely; he made a park to keep deer in; near to his houſe he built a church, and gave it the name of St *James's* church, becauſe he killed the giant on that day, which is ſo called to this hour: He did many more good deeds, and became a public benefactor to all perſons that lived near him.

CHAP. IV.

How Tom *kept a pack of hounds: His kicking a foot-ball quite away: Alſo how he had like to have been robbed by four thieves, and how he eſcaped.*

TOM having got ſo much money about him, and not being uſed to it; could hardly tell how to diſpoſe of it, but yet he did uſe means to do it; for he kept a pack of hounds, and men to hunt with him; and who but Tom then. So he took ſuch delight in

ſports, that he would go far and near o meetings, as cudgel-play, bear-bait-ng, football, and the like.

Now as Tom was riding one day, he ighted off his horſe to ſee the ſport, for hey were playing for a wager; Tom was a ſtranger and none did know him there; but Tom ſoon ſpoiled their ſport; for he meeting the foot-ball, took it ſuch a kick that they never found their ball more; they could ſee it fly, but whither none could tell: They all wondered at it, and began to quarrel with Tom; but ſome of them got nothing by it; for Tom gets a great ſpar, which belonged to a houſe that was blown down, and all that ſtood in his way he knocked down, ſo that all the country was up in arms to take Tom; but all in vain, for he manfully made way wherever he came.

When he was going from them, and returning homewards, he chanced to be ſomewhat late in the evening; on the road, their met him four ſtout ſufty

rogues, that had been robbing passengers that way; and none could escape them, for they robbed all they met with, both rich and poor. They thought when they met with Tom, he would be a good prize for them; perceiving that he was alone, made cock sure of his money; but they were mistaken, for he got a prize from them. Whereupon meeting with him, they bid him stand and deliver. What, said Tom, shall I deliver? Your money sirrah, said they. But, said Tom, you will give me better words for it, and you must be better armed. Come come, said they, we do not come here to prate, but we come for money, and money we will have, before you stir from this place. Aye, said Tom, is it so; nay then, get it, and take it.

So then one of them made at him but he presently unarmed him, and took away his sword, which was made of good trusty steel, and smote so hard on the others, that they began to put spurs to their horses and begone; but soon stayed their journey, for one

them having a portmanteau behind him, Tom ſuppoſing there was money in it, fought with a great deal of more courage than before, till at laſt he killed two of the four, and the other two he wounded very ſore, ſo that they cried out for quarters, and with much ado he gave them their lives, but took all their money, which was about two hundred pounds, to bear his expences home. Now when Tom came home he told them how he had ſerved the foot-ball players, and the four high-waymen, which cauſed a laughter from his old mother; then refreſhing himſelf, went to ſee how all things were, and what his men had done ſince he went from home.

Then going up into his foreſt, he walked up and down, and at laſt met with a luſty *Tinker*, that had a good ſtaff on his ſhoulder, and a great dog to carry his leather bag and tools to work. Tom aſked the Tinker from whence he came and whither he was going, for that was no highway: But the Tinker, being a ſturdy fellow, bid

him go look, and what was that to him, for fools would be meddling. No, says Tom, but I'll make you know, before you and I part, it is to me. Aye, said the Tinker, I have been this three long years, and have had no combat with any man, and none durst make me answer; I think they be all cowards in this country, except it be a man who is called Thomas Hickathrift who killed a giant, him I would fain see to have one combat with him. Aye, said Tom, but methinks I might be master in your mouth: I am the man, what have you to say to me? Why, said the Tinker, verily I am glad we have met so happily together, that we may have one single combat. Sure, said Tom, you do but jest. Merry, said the Tinker, I am in earnest. A match, said Tom, will you give me leave to get a twig? Aye, says the Tinker, hang him that will fight a man unarmed; I scorn that.

Tom steps to the gate, and takes one of the rails for his staff; so they fell to work, the Tinker at Tom, and Tom at the Tinker, like unto two giants they

aid on one or the other. The Tinker ad on a leather coat, and at every blow Tom gave the Tinker, his coat cracked gain, yet the Tinker did not give way o Tom an inch; but Tom gave the Tinker a blow on the ſide of the head, which felled the Tinker to the ground. Now, Tinker, where are you now, ſaid Tom.

But the Tinker being a man of mettle, leaped up again, and gave Tom a blow which made him real again, and followed his blows, and then took Tom on the other ſide, which made his neck crack again. Tom flung down the weapon, and yielded the Tinker to be the beſt man, and took him home to his houſe, where I ſhall leave Tom and the Tinker till they be recovered of their many wounds and bruiſes; which relation is more enlarged in, as you may read in the ſecond part of Thomas Hickathrift.

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